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The Woman Who AvengeD THE CHILDREN OF IZIEU

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THE CHILDREN'S home was a two-story rough-hewn stone building on the top of a hill in the village of Izieu, 50 miles east of Lyons, France. In the attic, which ran the length of the house, was a classroom with several battered desks, long wooden tables, two blackboards and children's drawings pasted up on the walls. Except for a farm next door, there were few neighbors. Firewood and food were delivered once a week. There were no visitors. This was occupied France in 1944, and in this house 41 Jewish children were hidden away from the Nazi terror that surrounded them.

Thursday, April 6, was a warm day—no clouds, bright sun. At 7:30 a.m., two canvas-covered trucks ground their way up the steep hill and roared into the courtyard, disgorging eight German S.S. men and two men in overcoats with wide-brimmed hats, one of whom was clearly in command. Two witnesses have identified him as S.S. Obersturmführer Klaus Barbie, head of the Gestapo's dreaded Department IV in Lyons. Most

of the children were in the dining hall eating a breakfast of hot chocolate, bread and jam when the S.S. men broke in. Aiming machine guns at the children, they forced them into the trucks in the courtyard. Then the men ransacked the house, becoming increasingly angry at the paucity of the children's possessions. Several more children were discovered hiding under a table in the attic classroom. The school doctor leaped from the second-story window and escaped into the woods amid bursts of gunfire. In the confusion, one small boy began racing across the courtyard, but the soldiers grabbed him and beat him with rifle butts. Blood streamed from his nose as he was thrown into the truck.

The last child, a blond, ringleted boy of 3, too terrified to walk, was carried into the truck. Julien Favet, a farmworker who happened to be passing by, was held at gunpoint while the arrests were going on. He remembers, "I couldn't do anything. Machine guns covered everyone. Most of the children were crying, a few were bravely singing. I knew it was finished for them."

The children of Izieu were taken to the cellar of the Fort Montluc Prison in Lyons. Klaus Barbie dispatched a telegram to Gestapo headquarters in Paris:

Subject: The Jewish children's home in Izieu. In the early morning hours the Jewish children's home "The Children's Colony" in Izieu was terminated. A

total of 41 children from 3-13 in age were removed... Cash or any other kind of possessions could not be secured. Transport to Drancy is arranged on April 7, 1944.

BARBIE, S.S. OBERSTURMFÜHRER

In less than five months, Paris would be liberated. This was a time when it was difficult to move troops or essential war supplies, but Klaus Barbie arranged the very next morning for the cattle cars that would take the children to the transit camp of Drancy on the first leg of their journey to Auschwitz and death in the gas chambers.

The slaughter of innocents is a subject so horrible that the mind rejects it.

Buried, the evil festerers and must be purged—or so feels one woman, Beate Klarsfeld, who has devoted her life to searching out Nazi war criminals and bringing them to justice. Beate Klarsfeld is almost single-handedly responsible for bringing Klaus Barbie, the infamous "Butcher of Lyons," to trial for his Crimes Against Humanity, which include not only those committed against the children of Izieu but the torture, deportation and murder of thousands of others as well.

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